

## Amid Protests, FirstNet-related Tactical LTE Communications System Used In Urban Shield Exercise

HSToday.US By Anthony Kimery

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Despite organized protesters' assertion that the [Urban Shield 2014](#) first responder exercise this weekend sponsored by the Alameda County, California Sheriff's Office promoted the militarization of police, the event was a full-scale regional preparedness exercise to assess the Bay Area's [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) funded Urban Areas Security Initiative](#) (UASI) response capabilities related to multi-discipline planning, policies, procedures, organization, equipment and training for all hazards, including natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other manmade disasters.

Urban Shield exercises rigorously test regional integrated systems for the prevention, protection, response and recovery in high-threat, high-density urban areas during a catastrophic event to implement the [National Incident Management System](#) (NIMS) and the [National Response Framework](#) -- something the protestors of this and other similar first responder readiness exercises don't seem to understand.

The overarching goals of Urban Shield exercises, according to the Urban Shield 2014 California bay area exercise Website, "include striving for the capability to present a multi-layered training exercise to enhance the skills and abilities of regional first responders, as well as those responsible for coordinating and managing large scale events. Urban Shield is implemented to identify and stretch regional resources to their limits, while expanding regional collaboration and building positive relationships. In addition, this exercise provides increased local business and critical infrastructure collaboration. Urban Shield challenges the skills, knowledge and abilities of all who participate. It not only improves regional disaster response capabilities, but provides a platform for national and international first responders, as well as the private sector, to work efficiently and effectively together when critical incidents occur."

Similarly, the metro Urban Shield Boston exercise states, "Urban Shield Boston is a national model, full-scale exercise designed to assess and validate the speed, effectiveness and efficiency of capabilities, as well as test the adequacy of regional policies, plans, procedures and protocols. This exercise incorporates regional critical infrastructure, emergency operation centers, regional communication systems, equipment and assets, as well as personnel

representing all aspects of emergency response including intelligence, law enforcement, Explosive Ordinance Disposal Units, Fire, EMS, etc.”

Nevertheless, one protest organizer said in an online forum post that, “Urban Shield is a showcase demonstration project of the military industrial complex that uses Oakland and the Bay Area for demonstrations of police type military force operations, military hardware uses, military type training exercises and corporate technology that is being used in combat zones all across the world,” adding that the exercise does nothing but promote “military force, military hardware and corporate technology that is being used to suppress governments and local populations ... targeted by the United States and its allies ...”

While the commenter acknowledged that the training exercises involve fire and emergency medical services, she claimed “the main function of Urban Shield is meant to be a showcase for the military industrial complex and it's affiliates to demonstrate and expand the sales of military hardware and technology normally used in combat zones, to local police forces in the Bay Area, and all across the nation.”

*Mother Jones* magazine, a left-leaning media outlet, [called the exercise](#) “the Convention for Warrior Cops.”

Although the Urban Shield 2014 exercise in Oakland, California was designed to coordinate and test overall regional public safety agencies’ preparedness for a significant natural or man-made event, Oakland Mayor Jean Quan nevertheless announced Urban Shield will no longer be held in the city, citing the controversial police shooting and protests in Ferguson, Missouri last month. Oakland officials also questioned police use of military-style equipment.

During Urban Shield 2014 in Oakland, California this weekend, Mutualink, Sonim and Oceus tested a FirstNet-related deployment of an Enhanced System on Wheels (ESOW). Numerous agencies in Northern California (SWAT, transit, etc.) used the LTE communications system to coordinate emergency response to a simulated terrorist situation. The exercise provided public safety officials in northern California the opportunity to prepare for a coordinated, multi-agency, emergency response using advanced collaboration across LTE Band 14.

DHS, through its [Office of Emergency Communications](#) (OEC), supports the establishment of

the [Broadband Network](#) [Nationwide Public Safety](#) and is working with the Departments of Commerce and Justice and Federal Communications Commission to ensure it meets the needs of users in the public safety community. Public safety broadband fulfills one of the 9/11 Commission's recommendation.

To that end, during the Urban Shield 2014 exercise this weekend, officials from the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NCRIC), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) and other agencies communicated and collaborated with onsite SWAT teams during a simulated emergency incident involving a terrorist boarding a public transit vehicle. The ESOW enabled all parties to share real-time video, images and voice communications using mobile phones and tablets on the scene. An ESOW provides secure local, multimedia multiparty collaboration capability between user equipment and legacy devices, such as video cameras and land mobile radios (LMRs).

Mike Sena, director of the Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NCRIC), said prior to the exercise that, "When we first explored options for interoperability between agencies, we found Mutualink was the only platform that allowed agencies to share audio, video and digital files over a secure network. We currently use the technology at various agencies within the San Francisco Bay area, and our goal is to continue the growth of the network within the region. A key feature of the system is that we can include first responders as well as other public and private entities for community-wide coordination."

"This exercise at Urban Shield is another proof-point of FirstNet's mission for delivering nationwide broadband capability for public safety, and further evidence that the future is now when it comes to next-generation technologies for first responders and emergency personnel," said Mutualink Vice President of Innovation Dr. Mike Wengrovitz.

"First responders and mission-critical personnel need the ability to access relevant information quickly to help assess a situation and become more efficient in making time-critical decisions. This exercise [showcased] technology that addresses these needs today," said Senior Director of Public Safety and Defense for Sonim Bob Escalle.

Mutualink's technology served as the interoperable communications platform for the ESOW enabling real-time sharing of radio, voice, text, video, data and location information in a secure environment. Mutualink serves as the gateway for bridging disparate systems so that all parties

responding to an emergency can communicate and collaborate in real time.

Sonim Technologies provided handheld devices for the ESOW based on their ultra-rugged features such as 20-plus hours of LTE based talk time, extreme durability in heat, dust, wet environments, visibility in direct sunlight and support for a wide range of android applications and accessories with full support of LTE Band 14.

Xiphos, Oceus Networks' 4G LTE lightweight deployable communications system -- a complete mobile "network in the box" -- provided the Band 14 broadband network for Urban Shield participants. The solution demonstrated interoperability and integration between first responders utilizing Mutualink applications, Sonim devices and COTS WiFi-enabled devices.

"Deployable technology creates an environment that allows first responders to literally bring the network with them, delivering coverage when and where it is needed to operate as part of a larger network or as a standalone node," said Jim Patterson, Oceus Networks' vice president of public and federal solutions. "We are excited to bring our proven technology to the public safety community and demonstrate how broadband solutions can transform the first responder mission in the field."

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